

History of the Town of Colma

A California State Law was passed in the late 1800's, State Penal Code 297 stated - prohibited any burials anywhere except an established cemetery such as one by a city or county, church, ethnic group or military. You could no longer bury a body on the homestead or along the wagon trail.

San Francisco had many cemeteries established by the time gold was discovered. Hundreds of thousands arrived bringing diseases, followed by deaths and filled their cemeteries to capacity.

Cemetery owners started looking for new locations to expand or relocate their burial grounds. They were frustrated in their attempt to buy San Francisco property. Land was too valuable for cemetery use said real estate promoters.

The San Francisco City Fathers passed Bill #54 & Ordinance #25 on 3-26-1900 stating that no further burials will be allowed in the City & County of San Francisco. With no further burials, they became a place of neglect and vandalism. They then became a health hazard.

Colma became the chosen area for cemeteries. A number of reasons:

1. Colma boundaries were then from the San Francisco border to the South S.F. border. From San Bruno Mountain to the ocean and you could leave San Francisco and come to our most southern point and get back home in one day. Important for a funeral party.
2. There was a main road called Mission Street that came all the way into Colma that though a dirt road was maintained all year long for vehicular traffic.
3. There were streetcars following Mission Street into Colma and funeral transport was added to the line.
4. The Southern Pacific Railroad followed a path southward from S.F. into Colma. This area of Southern Colma was chosen for the above reasons. By 1912, Colma had 12 cemeteries. They were:

Bodies taken from and number

- 1887, June 3 Holy Cross Catholic Cemetery Calvary Cross 39,307
- 1889, Jan. I Home of Peace Cemetery & Emanu-El Home of Peace 13,000
- 1889, Jan. I Hills of Eternity Mem. Pk.- Jewish Cemetery
- 1891, Dec. 20 Salem Memorial Park & Garden Mausoleum

City Cemetery 696

- 1892 Cypress Lawn Memorial Park Laurel Hill 35,000
- 1896 Mount Olivet, now just Olivet Memorial Park
- 1899 Italian Cemetery & Mausoleum City Cemetery 8,000
- 1901 Serbian Cemetery Laurel Hill
- 1901, July Eternal Home Cemetery
- 1901, June Japanese Cemetery Laurel Hill & Masonic
- 1903 GreenLawn Memorial Park Oddfellows 26,000
- 1904, Oct. 29 Woodlawn Memorial Park Masonic
- 1907 Sunset View

After the 1912 Eviction notice.

- 1935 Greek Orthodox Memorial Park
- 1947 Pet's Rest Cemetery & Crematory
- 1988 Hoy Sun Cemetery
- 1994, Feb.23 Golden Hills Memorial Park

In August of 1912 the San Francisco's Board of Supervisors declared intent to evict all cemeteries in their jurisdiction.

On Jan. 14, 1914 Removal notices were sent to all cemeteries, branding them as " A public nuisance and a menace and detriment to the health and welfare of city dwellers." Ordinance 2597

There were many delays to this order as the cemeteries and some citizens fought to have it revoked. By Nov. of 1937 the legal battles were over and bodies not removed were now ordered to be removed.

Colma Cemeteries now inherited hundreds of thousands of additional bodies.

This all led to the incorporation of the cemetery area that became known as Lawndale on August 5, 1924 . The Associated Cemeteries, made up of supervisors from each were concerned that what happened in S.F. could happen again. To protect the cemeteries they became organized and incorporated. They wanted the name Memorial Park but there was already a Memorial Park in our county. We kept Lawndale until the United States Postal Service informed us there was a Lawndale in Southern Calif. We went back to the name of Colma. This was on Nov. 17, 1941.

The First officers were:

- Mattrup Jensen, President of the Board
- W.A. Newall, Trustee

- C. J. Newell, Trustee
- Charles F. Frahm, Trustee
- J.J. Lagomarsino
- E. A. Weisenburger, Clerk
- Henry Kempf, Treasurer
- Joseph Cavalli, Marshall
- K. Slack, Recorder
- Hall C. Rose, Attorney